

(Monroe Journeys – August 2020)

## **9 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MY VIRTUAL AND RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS**

*by Jane Coleman*

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*Jane Coleman has been exploring consciousness for over 30 years. She was originally drawn to Bob Monroe's work because of out-of-body (OBE) travel as an answer to her frustrated dreams of being an astronaut. She attended the "Gateway Voyage" program with the hopes of having an OBE. Instead, her experiences profoundly shifted her consciousness and redirected the course of her life. Later, in "Starlines," she realized her dream of being an astronaut. An explorer of both inner and outer space, she holds degrees in aerospace engineering and theological studies. Her hobbies include flying, quilting, reading, blogging, traveling, and spoiling her Scotty.*

On June 20th the Monroe Institute launched its first "Gateway Voyage" and "Conscious Presence" virtual retreats. I had the privilege of attending "Conscious Presence," and I wanted to share with you my experience.

Some background on me is that I've been a student of the Monroe Institute for quite a few years. I have attended at least 15 residential programs. I'm a member of the Monroe Professional Association and am a Local Chapter Network leader in Dallas, Texas. With degrees in aerospace engineering and theological studies, I'm an explorer of both inner and outer space. All to say, I'm very familiar with the tools and benefits offered by Monroe.

First and foremost, Monroe has the immersion experience of a residential program down to a science. That said, I found the virtual experience to be more powerful than I expected—deeply meaningful and with profound insights.

The program started on Saturday afternoon and went through Wednesday. We met via Zoom, and all our audio-guided exercises were streamed. Tammy Matheny, Monroe's program registrar, sent us backup links to the exercises on the Monroe website in case Zoom hiccuped, and we all connected up via WhatsApp. This was a good idea. Some of us had internet issues and were able to stay connected in spite of them.

Our program started each morning at 9:30 EDT. We had two exercises in the morning, a short lunch break (about an hour), and two exercises in the afternoon. We usually wrapped up each day at 5:30 PM, with no activities in the evening. Our trainers Beth

Vaughan and Steve Winchester would suggest movies or content that we could enjoy in the evening that was compatible with our work together.

I wondered if we would bond as a group, something I greatly value in a residential program. As we were all face-to-face via Zoom, it felt like we bonded more quickly. Sure, we didn't have the casual conversations during spare time, but we did tend to interact more during exercise set-ups and debriefs. Zoom seems to make room for that more easily than residential retreats where we sit in the White Carpet room looking forward at the trainers. We were also a smaller group (six plus two trainers). I'm not sure I would have shared as much in a larger group, but that is typical of me, even at a residential program.

Prior to the program, Tammy sent us a list of stuff to do to get ready: set up your private space to do your exercises, make sure your internet can stream at a certain speed, tell your family you're going to be busy during certain times, stock up on food and snacks for 5 days, plan not to drive during the program.

In a nutshell, here's my comparison of virtual vs residential Monroe programs—

1. Our group bonded more quickly.
2. This was the first program where I did not gain 5 pounds, even though I bought some really good snacks.
3. I really missed the homemade cookies and getting to chat with the folks over at the office.
4. Visits to the crystal were strictly out-of-body.
5. Didn't get to see sunrises and sunsets in the Blue Ridge Mountains.
6. Did get to hug my pooches. Our group picture included our pets.
7. I didn't miss having to get up at o-dark-thirty to catch a plane to or from the program.
8. Didn't have to worry about airline connections or weather. That was a plus!
9. No travel, meals and lodging expenses. I saved a ton of money.

And life happened during our program. I was nursing a sick dog prior, and he died Sunday evening. Rather than shove that aside, I decided to incorporate the grieving in my experience, which was very enriching. Another participant had to take a family member to the hospital. He didn't have to leave the program. He missed the exercises he needed to and rejoined us when he could.

I really liked the virtual format. It's a win for Monroe as well. It expands their outreach to newer audiences, to folks who might not have the ability, time or resources for a residential program. As the pandemic has shifted us all to new ways of doing things, I'm

thinking this is a pretty cool way of getting my "Monroe fix" for the time being, maybe for quite a while. I'm already registered for "Peak Week" in July and will be looking at other virtual programs as they are offered.

I hope to see you in one of my virtual retreats.